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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE 9341
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INFO RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE 0375
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE 8237
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 0272
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA IMMEDIATE 0982
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 0558
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
RUEKDIA/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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SIPDIS

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DCHA/OFDA FOR ROBERT THAYER
AID/W FOR AA MARK WARD AND ANE ANNE DIX
DEPT PASS TO SCA/EX
DEPT PASS TO SCA/PB
DCHA/FPP FOR MATTHEW NIMS AND PAUL NOVICK
ROME FOR FODAG
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KATHMANDU FOR USAID OFDA BILL BERGER AND SUE MCINTYRE

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: US MILITARY OPTIONS IN SUPPORT OF USAID/OFDA IN
CYCLONE SIDR AFTERMATH

REF: A. A) DHAKA 1808
[1](#)B. B) DHAKA 1808
[1](#)C. C) DHAKA 1797
[1](#)D. D) STATE 157623
[1](#)E. E) DHAKA 1796
[1](#)F. AND PREV.

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Members of the Humanitarian Assistance Survey Team, Defense Attach, Office of Defense Cooperation chief, USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) and EMBOFF participated in briefings with host Armed Forces Division on 19 NOV, and the same group (less USAID/OFDA) overflew affected areas on 20 NOV in a host nation Army helicopter (detailed report septel). Initial impressions from the overflight were that major infrastructure (roads, bridges, power poles and lines,) survived largely intact, but major losses were seen in crops and in homes. Key issues repeated at all briefings, and borne out by first hand observation, are that the immediate needs are: potable water (both production and distribution), medical/public health support (focusing on preventing diseases in the storm's aftermath), shelter, clothing, and food (both in distribution of existing stockpiles and in replenishing stockpiles for their existing planned consumption by March 2008). The Armed Forces Division briefers did not forecast a large need for a military US response, saying host nation military capacity was generally adequate for the tasks. Field grade officers in Barisal, however, indicated that there is a need for tailored US support in the identified areas. END SUMMARY.

US MILITARY RESOURCES PRESENT IN BANGLADESH

[1](#)2. (SBU) USARPAC MEDICAL TEAM. Already in place in Bangladesh, this team had just completed their successful medical readiness training exercise in conjunction with the host country military in Comilla when Cyclone SIDR struck. The team has remained in place, is now staged in Dhaka, and

has been placed under the temporary control of the Humanitarian Assistance Survey Team (HAST). The team's leader and the HAST medical officer met with host military medical personnel and participated in the assessment of potential deployment of medical teams in conjunction with host military and/or civilian medical teams and their logistics requirements.

¶3. (SBU) HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE SURVEY TEAM (HAST). A forward party of 23 Marines and sailors detached from III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) arrived in Bangladesh 19 NOV to initiate planning in support of USAID/OFDA. The HAST is the forward planning element for the 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), which will lead the US military support effort, should it be requested. USS Kearsarge is currently steaming towards Bangladesh with an estimated arrival date of 22 NOV, as is USS Essex with an estimated arrival date of 27 NOV, and USS Tarawa expected on 4 DEC. Essex is primarily configured for Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operations and is intended to be the primary support ship, if needed. The HAST has initially identified logistics and lift capacity (both sea and air), medical support, and freshwater production as the principal areas where the III MEF's capabilities and host nation needs overlap.

¶4. (SBU) OFFICE OF DEFENSE COOPERATION. Host nation military and Post are in agreement that the already scheduled bilateral military exercise "BENGAL FLASH", as currently scripted, is not suited to the post-cyclone situation. Host nation military proposes to conduct joint HA/DR projects instead during the same time period of early December as originally scheduled for BENGAL FLASH. Specifically, 11 Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) would conduct joint

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operations in support of HA/DR, mobile DENTCAP/MEDCAPS (perhaps using small military vessels as platforms), infrastructure projects (coordinated minor civil engineering and construction projects), and surveying/mapping of water ways. Lift capacity might be used to delivering relief materials is those operations are still ongoing at that time. These concepts would be coordinated with USAID, both OFDA and Mission, activities.

¶5. (SBU) PACOM AUGMENTATION TEAM. The team recently added an active duty US Army Civil Affairs Officer to coordinate Civil Affairs operations on a long term basis. US Army Civil Affairs teams in support of Pacific Command (PACOM) have the ability to conduct assessment operations for longer term developmental projects supporting USAID mission objectives. Military Civic Action (MCA) programs can be planned and implemented by to serve as a link between HA/DR and ongoing Theater Security Cooperation programs. A specific example for Bangladesh would be the building of additional multipurpose shelters that serve as both a school and natural disaster shelter facility at the local or village level, funded by DOD. Additionally, US Army Civil Affairs has the ability to focus its civil affairs operations by mapping the desired areas to affect as directed and in close coordination with the country team. The PACOM augmentation team also has an information support team sub-element. This team can support ongoing HA/DR operations by designing and producing media products that improve the effectiveness of those operations, informing the public consistent with the Mission's public diplomacy goals.

COMMON US MILITARY GOALS

¶6. (SBU) CLOSE COORDINATION. The US military elements present in Bangladesh have made it clear that they are acting in support of USAID/OFDA, which is the lead agency for the USG response. All segments of the military resources are in close coordination and are aware of the need to de-conflict efforts and avoid duplicating efforts both internally and with the larger host nation and international response.

¶7. (SBU) POSITIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS. Close coordination with public affairs is also a mission requirement. Some factors in ensuring this are including host nation military officers and/or civilian officials in all relief material delivery. This also serves the dual purpose of ensuring a local guide and translator is present.

¶8. (SBU) MINIMAL FOOTPRINT. Of primary importance in any disaster scenario is to minimize any additional strain on the host nation's affected resources. The HAST's contingency planning at this stage, for example, is assuming that helicopters would return to the ship or to existing host nation military facilities for refueling instead of setting up a forward refueling point with US Marines and sailors actually on the ground.

¶9. (SBU) WAY FORWARD. Possible areas where various US military capabilities overlap with apparent host nation needs have been identified, and the US military presence is prepared to move in support of USAID/OFDA if US military support to the humanitarian operation is determined to be appropriate. The final phase of the HAST's assessment mission will be when BGen Bailey, 3d MEB Commander, meets with host nation Chief of Army Staff, General Moeen, on 22 NOV to determine to what extent, if any, US military support will be requested. If such a request is made, the HAST would remain to coordinate the response.
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